









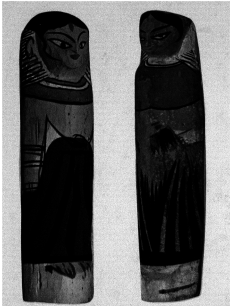
## FOLK ART OF BENGAL











Painted wooden  
female doll,  
Birbhum.

Painted wooden  
female doll,  
Hooghly.

# FOLK ART OF BENGAL

BY  
AJITCOOMAR MOOKERJEE

*With a Foreword by*  
SIR WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN



PUBLISHED BY THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA  
1939



PRINTED IN INDIA  
PRINTED BY BHUPENDRALAL BANERJEE  
AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, SENATE HOUSE, CALCUTTA.  
REG. NO. 1198a—APRIL, 1939—E

DEDICATED  
TO  
DR. SYAMAPRASAD MOOKERJEE



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	-	-	-	-	xi
PREFACE	-	-	-	-	xiii
TRADITION	-	-	-	-	1
ALIPANA	-	-	-	-	5
Circular Alipana	-	-	-	-	6
Brata-Alipana	-	-	-	-	7
DOLLS AND TOYS	-	-	-	-	11
Clay figures	-	-	-	-	12
Wooden figures	-	-	-	-	13
Potter's models	-	-	-	-	13
Pith figures	-	-	-	-	14
PAINTING	-	-	-	-	16
Scroll-painting	-	-	-	-	16
Mural-painting	-	-	-	-	18
Miniature-painting	-	-	-	-	19
METAL AND CANE WORKS	-	-	-	-	20
Domestic vessels	-	-	-	-	20
Statuettes	-	-	-	-	21
Cane and bamboo crafts	-	-	-	-	22
EMBROIDERY AND TEXTILES	-	-	-	-	23
Kantha	-	-	-	-	23
Textile industries	-	-	-	-	24
MINOR ARTS	-	-	-	-	25
Mask	-	-	-	-	25
Sika	-	-	-	-	25
Blocks for making mango and sugar cakes	-	-	-	-	26
Sara and Ghat	-	-	-	-	26
Pottery	-	-	-	-	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	-	-	-	-	29
Magazine articles	-	-	-	-	30
DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES	-	-	-	-	33
PRINCIPAL COLLECTIONS	-	-	-	-	43
SOME IMPORTANT FAIRS ( <i>Melaa</i> )	-	-	-	-	45
MAP	-	-	-	-	47
INDEX	-	-	-	-	49



## FOREWORD

The subject of folk art is one of great importance, and Mr. Ajitcoomar Mookerjee's contribution is very much to the point. Such a work, a promising introduction to a study of folk art parallel to that which my old friend Dinesh Chandra Sen has carried out so admirably for the Bengali folk songs, should lead to further local research. Mr. Mookerjee's pioneer work will no doubt stimulate others to discover and publish local examples of this peasant art, so admirable in its naive presentment of story, image, so powerful and resourceful in fanciful design.

Such discovery, alas, is but a second best. The best would be that this vital creative and spiritual impetus should have continued among the Indian peasantry. Something has happened to chill this activity throughout the world. We may have to wait decades for the re-emergence of a living popular art; meanwhile it is right that we should value and preserve every garment woven for the ingenious spirit of man. Such a work as that of Mr. Mookerjee will increase our respect for the genius of the peasant hand and mind.

WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

FAR OAKRIDGE  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE



## PREFACE

My knowledge of the traditional life in rural Bengal came to me from my grandmother with whom I spent my early years at a village in this province. I am deeply indebted to her for the experience which I then gathered and which has always proved useful to me.

A folk art should be distinguished from a 'highway' art both of which, however, can grow at one and the same time. Folk art is always traditional but all traditional art is not folk art. Innumerable motifs, figures, terra-cottas, drawings, etc., either in Alipana, dolls and toys, wood and metal works, embroidery and textiles or in minor arts have to be excluded from the present work as they are cultivated from folk art and are nothing but its elaborations and transformations.

Folk art is not the accidental discovery of an individual; it is the product of the people, of the whole community. It is an art confounded with superstitions and religio-magical beliefs tinged by folkloristic fantasies of the masses and what died everywhere else in the contemporary world still lives on in the domain of Bengal's folk culture which belongs to that common fund of primitive or primordial conditions. (Here, the word 'primitive' always means the psychologically primitive.) Its survival to-day in its pristine form evokes the greatest interest in all students of art and ethnology. Ethnology may be of high importance in the determination of the habits and characteristics of the Bengali people, their origin and expansion.

The overwhelming conservatism of Bengal's folk tradition keeps alive this culture, specially such forms and motifs of it as are noticeable in the various designs of Alipana, dolls and toys, wood and metal works. They bear a close resemblance to the heritage of ancient art and culture to which the Western Asiatic and the Indus Valley



civilization belongs. It is, therefore, a negligible question whether this simple culture is intelligible to the sophisticated few or not, it comes down in pupillary succession from an indeterminably distant past and it does not require any force of prophecy to assert that it will continue to exist for untold generations until the tradition as a whole disappears.

During the last eight years of my studies in the domain of Bengal's folk culture, I came in touch with the great scholars of this country and outside, specially with Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen and Mr. G. S. Dutt, I.C.S., whose encouragement and help I gratefully acknowledge. Mr. Dutt's appreciation of Bengal's folk art greatly helped me to explore new field in my study of the subject.

Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, formerly Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University, whose interest in the past of our country has led to the most far-reaching results in the domain of scholarship, has by his help and encouragement made it possible for me to bring the present work to its completion. I gratefully acknowledge his generous patronage.

Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen, Mr. Hari Hor Sett, Mr. Bijoy Singh Nahar, Mr. Nandalal Bose, Director, Kala-Bhawan, and the authorities of the Asutosh Museum have kindly permitted me to take some photographs from their individual collections for using them in my present work. I have to thank Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, Rai Bahadur Girijanath Palchowdhuri, Mr. Bankim Chandra Bhattacharjee, Mr. Ashoka K. Sen, Dr. S. Law, Mr. B. M. Saha, Mr. S. C. Sen, Mr. J. N. Ghosh and Messrs. Indian Photo Engraving Company for help concerning this book and particularly Mr. Sudhansu Kumar Ray who has rendered me the most ungrudging help.

Mr. Devaprasad Ghose, Curator, Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, has read and revised the book in its manuscript form, a friendly service

for which I am grateful. I should like to express my gratitude to Mr. J. C. Chakravorti, Registrar, Calcutta University, and also to Mr. D. B. Gangulee, Superintendent, University Press, for their kind interest in the publication of my work.

AJITCOOMAR MOOKERJEE

*Calcutta, February 17, 1939*



## TRADITION

THE folk art of Bengal does not belong to a particular period.

It is the expression of the Bengali people themselves, of the rural millions who form the backbone of the nation. For untold generations they have delighted in an art which is collective, and has never attached any great importance to individual artistic talent. The flow of tradition by which it is still carried on in the mass consciousness has a vital force, going back to the mists of antiquity. The question of date is, therefore, very negligible in the consideration of folk art. It should be judged not by its age but by its mode of expression. It is an art transmitted from generation to generation without any essential changes, the roots reaching deep into the soil.

To understand this force of tradition in Bengal in its proper perspective, a study of her inhabitants and of their socio-religious life is necessary. The Bengalees are a race in which there is a great admixture of non-Aryan elements.\* These elements have ever been active to preserve the traditional culture which has not been disturbed by any other foreign ethnic element down to the present day. The worship of the Mother Goddess, the Snake Goddess (Manasa), the Harvest Goddess, the Vana-Durga Goddess, the Sasthi Goddess and the Goddess presiding over diseases (Sitala)†—still so popular in Bengal—is a significant survival from ancient days.

\* Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*; *The People of India*, pp. 39-41, 73-98, 114-86.

† Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, pp. 39-78; Vol. II, pp. 549-61; Datta, *A Few Prehistoric Relics*, pp. 28-45; Notes, ii-xxiii; Banerjee, *Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Medieval India*, *Ind. Hist. Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1938, pp. 106-7.

The representations of the popular deities called '*Pacho-Pachi*' and '*Buda-Budi*' (the old man and his old consort) which may be identified with Siva and Parvati are of remote antiquity. The Siva cult and the *linga* worship have profoundly impressed the hearts of the people of the land. This Siva cult is found in its popular form in the Gambhira festival of North Bengal and 'at one time extended its sway in all directions, north and south, east and west.\* The peculiar practices such as the '*Dhula-sapta*' (dusting the temple of Siva with the hair of a devotee), '*Phul-bhanga*' (breaking down twigs from jack tree), '*Ban-phoda*' (piercing the different portions of the body by means of arrow and trident), '*Bhar*' (possession of spirits), etc., observed in the festival of Gambhira or the '*Leoa-bata*' and the '*Kur-bata*' (subjugation of bridegroom by a mystic formula), '*Kanui-dhoana*' (washing the elbow of bridegroom by milky water) during the marriage ceremony and various vows and practices of Bata, superstitions and customs connected with agriculture, and cuttings and offerings of hair in general, are extremely primitive in nature.† The repetition and monotony of the same tune in singing and the fondness for red are nothing but the unconscious expression of the primitive temper of the people.‡ The very yell uttered by the devotees of the Gambhira festival, the *Hei-Hei-Hei* sounds made on many occasions, specially in the stick-play and boat-race, and the auspicious lip-play sounded like *Ulu-Ulu-Ulu* by the women of Bengal and the veiling of their faces before certain trees and their belief in witch-craft, leave no doubt about the antiquity of the people of the land and its tradition.‡

\* Sarker, *Folk Element in Hindu Culture*, p. 6.

† Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People*, pp. 159-60; *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 201; March, *Evolution and Physiological Law in Art, Mind*, 1896, p. 444; Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology*, pp. 21-105.

There are some important factors which help to keep this tradition intact in Bengal. The '*stri-achara*' of the womenfolk has always preserved the traditional culture for generations in the simplest hamlet-life of the country. The nature of the land with its flora and fauna forms a whole in itself without detaching the individual from his surroundings and thereby helps the people to inherit a common tradition and culture which has essentially a folk origin. The profane art that flourished under royal patronage in Bengal for a short period of time left the popular tradition of the country entirely untouched and it ran its own course without any interruption. One of the decisive elements in the preservation of a popular tradition is the cheapness of the materials used. But it also accounts for the loss of early specimens of popular arts and crafts. Impermanency resulting from this fact, or from heavy rainfalls in Bengal, has always stimulated the desire to keep this tradition alive from mother to daughter, from father to son. There is no "fashion" in the popular arts and crafts of Bengal and so the taste never varies (until the tradition as a whole disappears). They are not made to order ; they are essentially executed for household purposes and it is the producer who is often the consumer. This domestic tradition is the bedrock upon which the folk art is founded and accounts for its almost stationary character. The universal prevalence of the traditional story-telling, dancing, singing festivities and ceremonies along with the processions and social gatherings play a prominent part in the life of the people. All these have been able to preserve in the mother-soil of Bengal the elements which have remained, as it were, in their pristine stage.

To understand the mind of the people, we should study those qualities which in the popular literature of Bengal are emphasized as the ideals of life. In the numerous ballads and songs which

are sincere and natural outbursts of the unsophisticated life of the villagers, a vivid and living expression of popular thoughts and sentiments closely connected with the conception of their art has been reflected. It is obvious that the folk culture of Bengal is thus a 'spontaneous expression of the life of the people themselves and is an inseparable part of that life.'

## ALIPANA

DURING festivities and religious functions, the womenfolk of Bengal draw Alipana designs on the floors and courtyards with a small piece of cloth soaked in a solution of ground rice. It is likely that Alipana designs were originally used to be drawn by spreading white powdered rice or by drawing lines on a layer of this powder. Perhaps the necessity of drawing Alipana with a solution of ground rice first arose when it was intended to be drawn on walls and pillars. The use of any other colour but white is hardly to be seen in the Alipana drawings of Bengal.

' Alipana is a *piece d'occasion*, and has not been painted on a wall or ceiling once for all like the cave paintings of Ajanta. From time immemorial and for times without number the women folk of Bengal have been using these designs for religious and ceremonial purposes.\* The most important element in Alipana is ornamentation, and this is why the subject-matters of Alipana have been assimilated and transformed. Concreteness of representation is meagre but we have all the compensatory qualities of a traditional pattern. The system of drawing Alipana is thus abstract and conventional. Forms and motifs and their combinations in Alipana, which have to be drawn repeatedly, ' have become conventionalised to a certain extent for the convenience of successive generations of painters. This conventionalisation discounts variety and originality. Thus we find a certain mechanical monotony, a stereotyped symmetry in the designs of Alipana, yet the inherent vitality of the motifs of these designs is such

\* Ray, *The Characteristic Features of Alipana*, J. A. & C., Vol. I, No. I, July, 1938, p. 6.



that it invariably asserts itself through its conventional fetters. On the other hand the repetition and uniformity of the motifs in these designs give a stable character to the Alipana and because of this stability the spectator or worshipper feels confidence in placing the seat of the gods on it and using it as a holy carpet.\* So Alipana has its utilitarian aspect. In the time of worshipping a deity, specially in the Laksmi-puja, circular Alipana is used as a holy pedestal. It keeps balance with the circular form of the measure-bowl (*Kunke*) filled with paddy which is a symbolical representation of the Goddess Laksmi.

Thus in Alipana, there are hardly any quadrangular or instrumental drawings. Circular designs are the life-blood of Alipana. Circular Alipana is complete in itself. It grows round its own centre which happens to be its natural prime axis. The design then spreads in its own evolutionary process. But the shape and form of creepers and other designs in Alipana have no stoppage or accent, they proceed according to the sweet will of the artist.

On analysing the structure of circular Alipana it will be noticed that this type of Alipana consists of floral and linear devices. Radiating from the centre the main design spreads over the major space of the entire surface. This may be termed the central design and it forms the starting point of the circular Alipana. Around the first circle, one-third of the space measuring the entire Alipana is decorated with charming foliage of multifarious designs or by interlocking semicircles (Fig. 1). By the characteristic interconnection of these parts two classes have evolved in this Alipana, namely, the 'Mature' and the 'Chain' type. That Alipana which develops through the various creepers being placed one after another belongs to the 'Mature' type. The 'Chain' Alipana takes the form and shape by the gradual growth of linear devices from the very beginning.

\* *Ibid.*, p. 7.

In the above-mentioned Alipana, which is commonly known as 'Laksmi-puja' Alipana, no animal motifs are used except as vehicles of the respective deities. The reason is that these kinds of Alipana are used as holy decorative pedestals for the deities—specially for the Goddess Laksmi, who is associated with wealth and abundance.

Besides the 'Mature' and the 'Chain' Alipana there are to be noticed other minor systems of Alipana. In fact they are nothing but concise editions of the two kinds of Alipana mentioned above.

The Alipana of the Brata-stories is of an entirely different kind. It consists of fragmentary pictures serving to illustrate the Brata-stories. There is no limitation in the subject-matter ; it is supplied by the Brata-stories and is sometimes accompanied by dancing. Generally the young girls draw the Brata-Alipana during the winter season, specially in the Bengali month of *Magh*. The Alipana of Tara-Brata is the most favourite one. It represents the sun with the rays at the top flanked by Siva-Durga motifs, the moon at the bottom and in between the sun and the moon the universe is placed with sixteen stars. Below the moon, the earth is represented as the seat of the devotee (Fig. 2). Generally this Tara-Brata-Alipana is to be practised every day in the month of *Magh*, and in the last day of that month all the motifs drawn before are to be shown simultaneously. They add *Sat-Satin* (co-wives), conjugal birds, trees, fish, bride and bridegroom in the palanquin, and various objects to vivify the life of the village folk ; there is hardly anything left out of their Alipana drawings on that particular day. It is curious to note that only in the Alipana of Maghmandal-Brata, which is another favourite Brata-story of the country girls, the use of various coloured powders are to be seen. In this Alipana, the five circles with the sun at the top and the moon at the bottom are to be drawn by lines incised on earth. The first circle is



Some Pictographic Marks in Alipana Drawings

usually filled up with powdered bael leaves (green), the second one with pounded turmeric (yellow), the third one with burnt husk powder (black), the fourth one with powdered rice (white), the fifth one with powdered brick (red). And the sun is fully covered with powdered brick and the moon with powdered rice (Fig. 3).

A vivid account is quoted below from one of the ballads current in Eastern Bengal showing how a country girl illustrates a Brata-story with Alipana designs. It is said in the Kajalrekha-ballad that 'she (Kajalrekha) kept handfuls (of rice) of a very fine quality—the *Shali*—under water until they were thoroughly softened. Then she washed them carefully and pressed them on a stone. She prepared a white liquid paste with them and first of all she drew the adored feet of her parents which were always uppermost in her mind. She next drew two granaries taking care to paint the foot-steps of the harvest goddess in the paths leading to them, and she introduced at intervals fine ears of rice drooping low with their burden. Then she drew the palace of the great god Siva and his consort Parvati in the Kailasa mountains. In the middle of a big lotus leaf she painted Visnu and Laksmi seated together, and on a chariot drawn by the royal swan, she painted the figure of Manasa Devi from whom all victories proceeded. Then she drew the figure of witches and the Siddhas who could perform miracles by *tantrik* practices and next of the nymphs of heaven. She drew a *Scora* grove (*Trophis aspera*) and under it the figure of Bana Devi (the sylvan deity). Then she painted Raksa Kali—the Goddess who saves us from all dangers. The warrior-god Karttikeya and the writer-god Ganesa she drew next with their respective *bahanas* or animals they rode. And then Ram and Sita and Laksmiana were drawn by her admirably. The great chariot Puspaka—the aeroplane—was sketched in her drawings and the Gods Yama and Indra were also introduced in this panorama.

'She next painted the sea, the sun and the moon, and last of all an old dilapidated temple in the middle of an woodland with the picture of a dead prince inside it. She drew all figures excepting her own. The figures of the Needle-Prince and of his courtiers were all there but not any of her own.

'When the painting was finished, she kindled a lamp fed by sacred butter and then she bowed down with her head bent to the ground.'\*

In Brata-Alipana, the scope of the representation thus increases according to the theme of the story, but the character of the designs remains unaltered owing to countless repetitions which have evidently been carried on for centuries together without any perceptible changes.

We find, in the various kinds of Alipana as mentioned above, certain forms and motifs which are more akin to hieroglyph than to Alipana. Dr. A. N. Tagore, and also Mr. S. Ray, have described them as hieroglyphic in character.† Traces of these forms and motifs are frequently noticeable in the sketches and pictographic marks of ancient times.

It is thus evident from the study of different kinds of Alipana that the repetition and uniformity in their motifs are the most fundamental factors. This symmetrical character of Alipana has definitely helped to preserve the old quality in some of the motifs, both figurative and decorative. Specially the two figures of Tara-Brata, commonly known as Siva-Durga, bearers of palanquin, *Sat-Satin* (co-wives), conjugal birds and some vegetable motifs are similar to those abstract forms discovered in the neolithic period. Besides these, the treatment of numerous other motifs of Alipana, though allied to new forms, is essentially primitive in character.

\* Sen, *Myrmen Singh Ballads*, pp. 264-69.

† Tagore, *Banglar Brata*, p. 33; Ray, *Alpana-mul ki 'chitra-kahar'-lipi* ? Darbh, Vol. 45, 1345, B. S., pp. 361-63.

### III

#### DOLLS AND TOYS

**DOLLS** in Bengal do not generally mean the playthings of children only. The word doll has a wider connotation ; it also includes the various wooden figures either carved on the legs of the bedsteads or Rathas (chariots) or brackets and friezes in the cottage architecture. This is why they are included in this general survey of dolls and toys.

Dolls and toys made for children are shaped mainly out of leaves of trees, cane, cloth, pith, clay and wood. These can be divided into two classes, *viz.*, (1) those that are hand-made and (2) those that are made from casts or moulds.

By hand-made dolls and toys are meant those which are formed with leaves, cane, cloth, wood or clay. The practice of making dolls and toys by leaves, cane or cloth is fast disappearing. Generally these kinds of dolls and toys are made by braiding the leaves, cane and cloth. Clay and wooden dolls and toys are now-a-days the most common things of the hand-made tradition. Clay modelling is generally limited to the shaping of the figures such as the mother and child (Figs. 8, 11), the young girls (Fig. 6), a couple (Fig. 7), the mendicant (Fig. 10) and various other kinds of figure toys (Figs. 4, 5). These figures are either burnt in a slow fire of husk or dried up in the sun.

Endowed with traditional lore, the women of Bengal easily shape such dolls and toys by pinching with their hands the pure clay free from any other foreign element. To mark the eyes, ornaments or the pointed breasts of the hand-made figures, pellets are stuck into the body. Sometimes the apple of the eye or the orna-

ment of the limbs are shown either by perforation or by grooves. The lower portion of some of the figures is a solid mass and does not show any mark of sex. It is only in *Alhadi* dolls in which the suggestion of sex is developed, the pubic hair is accidentally pitted and the valva triangle are incised by a line. Among the toy figures, animals specially the horses are mounted on wheels (Fig. 5). The representation of these toy-carts or wheeled vehicles indicates a tradition of the remotest past. It is a moot point whether many of the human and animal figures that are adopted as dolls and toys by the womenfolk are really playthings or cult objects. Some of the figures such as *Sitala*, *Sasthi* and *Alaksmi* executed in the same style as those of dolls and toys by the womenfolk are actually worshipped as cult objects. It is curious to note that the goddess *Sasthi* (Fig. 27) along with her children and the vehicle, a tom-cat, are sometimes made out of a lump of turmeric paste. Pregnancy is indicated on the *Sasthi* goddess and sometimes post-pregnant wrinkles are marked on her abdomen. The height of all these hand-made figures is generally three to five inches and rarely exceeds a foot.

The characteristic features of all these images are vigour and weight. The form has always been reached in an abstract manner. The brittle lines of the figures indicate pent up energy and dynamic movement. The passage of thousands of years does not disturb the inherent primitive quality in the treatment of these hand-made figures. Though these dolls, cult objects and figure toys are grotesque in form, there is a vigorous implication of movement in them. The traditional artists do not attempt to depict feet and palms either in human or animal figures realistically. They are sometimes suggested by thick lines and curves. This special formal practice also goes back to a very early age.

The theme of the hand-made figures mentioned above being definite and the predominant feature being the essence of form,

the figures are rarely painted with colour. Sometimes sun-baked clay figures are glazed with lacquer (Fig. 7). On the other hand, colour is a well-marked feature in the wooden dolls and toys. In this case the artist lays more stress on colour and the forms are rendered more vivid by its application. To throw into prominence the particular portions of the body which are already indicated strong splashes of the artist's brush are applied dipped in principal colours. In the wooden dolls and toys some attention is always paid to their features. The general outline of the form of these wooden dolls bears a striking resemblance to the case in which an Egyptian mummy is preserved and for this they are sometimes called 'mummy' dolls (Figs. 12, 13). Male figures are rare.

The wooden figure toys are treated with a great economy of means both in form and decoration. These qualities of simplicity charges them with strength and vigour (Figs. 16, 17). In these wooden dolls and toys, colour scheme is represented by red, black and blue and yellow forms the general ground of the body. The treatment of the line is specially worthy of notice and represents a very old tradition.

Besides these, the potters make different kinds of dolls and toys from moulds. The original moulds are very old and are used for generations. According to the size of a figure, a moderate quantity of clay is pressed on the mould which is coated with sand. This coating easily disconnects the figure from the original die. The potters then keep it in the sun and burn it under fire, colour it and sell it at the local fairs. The main character of these dolls and toys is their significant plastic form. The colours in these figures are employed with the greatest possible economy. Different poses are animated and specially the treatment of the drapery is worthy of notice (Fig. 22). The doll figures which occasionally come out from the potters' moulds show



an overwhelming sense of humour (Fig. 26). Of the many representations of animals by these potters, the cow and the calf, the horse, the bird (Fig. 23) and the elephant are marked by a very old tradition.

Pith (*Sola*) dolls and toys (Fig. 24) are made by *Solaḥar*. These figures are made either by carving out the solid pith or by joining the different pieces of the same material. Die is also used for making big figures. The colours employed on the pith being soaked on the surface give forth a soft tonality of extraordinary character. Those dolls which are specially made by *Solaḥar* for the play commonly known as 'Dolls-dance', are big in size. The colour harmony in these dolls and toys is very charming and the figures are characterised by suppleness of modelling. But this play is gradually becoming out of fashion. At times even to this day there are shows current in the villages with a kind of dolls made of palm leaves. The peculiar shape and form of these figures remind us of the well-known 'Shadow-play' figures of Java.

All these dolls and toys which are mentioned above, are not made after a study of child-psychology; it is their novelty of form and colour which has charmed the minds of children for ages.

The wooden dolls which are found in Rathas (chariots), thrones, bedsteads, bull-pillars and in the woodworks attached to the thatched cottages, are big in size. The carpenters of the wood carvings are called *Sutradhar*.

Sculptures in the round represent the traditional hand of the carpenters. They are complete in themselves and need no architectural background. These figures are characterised by their vigorous simplicity and dynamic force (Fig. 18). The installation of *Brisa-Kat* (Bull-posts) in memory of dead persons usually at the junction of three roads is a practice surviving from very early times. Generally

on its base a male or female figure is shown and in the middle a bull and sometimes on the top Siva-lingam or the image of Hara-Parvati is carved out from the solid wood. The Sikhara (topmost part) is finished either by a pyramidal shape or by pointed peaks. The dolls represented in the *Brisa-Kat* are all monumental in character (Figs. 19-21).

The wooden brackets and friezes attached to the thatched cottages though fully carved out are rilievo in character. Their function is to strengthen the cornices and frames of a house and to produce a pictorial effect. Thus being subjected to space and proportion according to the design and size of the house, these woodworks are lacking in freedom. But their vigorous simplicity enlivened by rhythmical treatment produces that dignified attitude which is a characteristic feature of the sculpture in the round.

Most of the wood carvings are originally painted by different colours and sometimes such coloured works have maintained their brilliance for many years even when they lie uncared for.

## IV PAINTING

**I**N Bengal, the word 'Pata' signifies a painted picture. From this word originated in current dialect the word 'Patua' which means one who paints a picture. Now-a-days the word 'Patua' has formed a class name. The pictures painted by these 'Patuas' are mostly scenes from mythological stories.

These paintings are of two kinds, one is the big scroll and the other is the miniature (in form but not in spirit). The scrolls are ten to twenty cubits in length and the width is from one and a half to two cubits. A scroll is prepared by plastering with thin clay or chalk upon a proportionate piece of paper mounted on strong cloth. The second type of painting is generally drawn on 'tulat-paper' (hand-made coarse paper), the size of which is somewhat bigger than that of the foolscap size paper. Formerly the 'Patuas' earned money by going around the villages with these paintings, explaining to the people their significance but now they are starving and begging from door to door for want of encouragement and proper help.

The artists of the scroll-paintings are of two classes. One class paints the large scrolls, whereas the other class, better known as *Jadu-patuas* (magic-painters), paints comparatively small scrolls. The chief characteristic of the scroll-paintings is that it contains all the qualities of mural paintings. The theme of these pictures is definite and the paintings reflect maximum economy of means. The painters have tried to express their view-point by a manipulation of the limbs of the figures and thereby a pantomimic effect is produced (Figs. 30, 31). There is no suggestion of atmosphere,

neither is there any attempt to produce effects. Sobre colouring is always the rule—Indian red, black, yellow, blue and green being the chief colours. Indian red is always used to prepare the background. These scrolls are direct in story-telling power and so we do not require any explanation to grasp the idea behind the scenes from the interpreters. Their reciting of the subject-matters is necessary only to keep them engaged as they unrol their scrolls during a show before the public. A noticeable feature of these figures is their movement pregnant with rhythmical composition that charges them with a forward direction.

It has already been mentioned that the scrolls of the *Jadu-patua*s are comparatively small. Their pictures were mainly shown to the Santals of Western Bengal and the *Bediyas* of Eastern Bengal. But now-a-days, they have become quite familiar to all the villagers. From a writing of Mr. Dutt, we come to know that 'whenever a Santhal man, woman or child dies the *Jadu Patua* appears at the house of the bereaved family with a ready-made sketch of the deceased done from his own imagination. There is no attempt at versimilitude but the picture merely consists of drawings of an adult or child or a male or female according to the age and sex of the deceased. The *Jadu Patua* presents the picture completely drawn in colour with one omission only, *viz.*, the iris of the eye. He shows the picture to the relatives and tells them that the deceased is wandering about blindly in the other world and will continue to do so until they send gifts or money or some other articles through him, *viz.*, (*Jadu Patua* himself), so that he can perform the act of *Chakshudan* or bestowal of eye-sight. . . . So the relatives make presents of money or some other articles of domestic use to the *Jadu Patua* for transmission to the deceased and the *Jadu Patua* then puts the finishing touch to the picture by performing the act of *Chakshudan* or supplying the iris of the eye in the

picture of the deceased. It is perhaps from this semi-magical practice that the Jadu Patua derives his name (Jadu—Magic ; Patua—painter).<sup>\*</sup> He further writes that their art will be found to possess interest in the field of pictorial art comparable in some ways to that of Negro art in the field of sculpture, with this difference that while the Negro art of sculpture is now extinct and belongs to a dead past, the primitive pictorial art of the Jadu Patuas is still a living art in full possession of its primæval vigour.<sup>\*</sup>

Besides this, the Jadu-patuas represent Tiger's God and the two deities, Satyapir and Satyanarayan in their scrolls. Animals, specially the lion and the tiger, play a prominent part in these scroll-paintings. The noble animals are shown in full face and ignoble animals in profile. Their paintings are characterised by primitive qualities, *viz.*, vigour, naive directness, circular dottings and simple and pure colourings. Later on these Jadu-patuas begin to draw the scenes of *Krisnalila* and *Ramlila*. Though the conceptions of these subject-matters have been borrowed, the technique of the Jadu-patuas still remains essentially primitive (Figs. 28, 29).

Some mural paintings in the style of Jadu-patuas can be seen in the temples of Bankura district in Western Bengal. This district practically undisturbed for a long time from foreign influence still hoards in its bosom places like Mallabhum—the Land of Wrestlers where 'the ancient Hindu culture and art survive even to the present day to an extent unknown in the rest of Eastern India.'<sup>†</sup> From the pictorial point of view, these mural paintings occupy a unique place and they have all the attributes of strength, vitality and simple rhythm which are noticeable in primitive art.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Dutt, The Tigers' God in Bengal Art, *The Modern Review*, Nov., 1932, pp. 527-28.

<sup>†</sup> French, The Land of Wrestlers, *Indian Art and Letters*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1927, p. 17 and Plate IX.

In the paintings which have already been mentioned as the miniature, a greater efficiency in line drawing has been shown. The lines are distinctly bold, swift and attractive. In conception as well as in technique there is simplicity and boldness. The dignified attitude and novelty of form of the figures reveal the traditional hands of the artists. Generally the social life forms the subject-matter of these paintings. These pictures though diminutive in form to look at, are really the miniature forms of bigger drawings (Figs. 32, 33).

## METAL AND CANE WORKS

IN Bengal, craftsmen are acquainted mainly with two metals, copper and brass. Of these, brass work again is more common. The designs on these metals are done in two principal ways, viz., by engraving and by twisting. On the surface of pitchers, utensils, rice bowls, etc., lines are carved, and statuettes and other figures are made by hammering and twisting.

It is to be seen that owing to the necessity of a thorough daily cleansing of all domestic vessels, raised decorations are generally avoided. Encrusting and damascening have also not been practised. The various decorations on such vessels are engraved with lines incised by sharp-pointed instruments. The lines are almost unbroken and bold in effect. In the space between the parallel lines incised on the globular portion of the vessels, various kinds of vegetable and animal motifs are engraved. The rice bowls largely found in the district of Bîrbhum are richly varied in design and excellent in workmanship. The main theme of the designs is a pair of interlocked pigeons with the heads separated, the body from neck to tail being completely united (Fig. 36).<sup>\*</sup> Besides this motif, other designs, both floral and animal, are also executed either by twisting or by engraving on these bowls.

Many of the *Gramdevatas* (village gods and goddesses), carved in brass mixed up with an alloy of copper, can be traced particularly in Western Bengal. The combined methods of hammering and twisting are applied in making these images. They are

<sup>\*</sup> Dr. Rabindranath Tagore has pointed out to me the fact that the whole composition also suggests a palm-leaf.

decorated with twisted and spiral motifs. Pellets are stuck into the body to mark the eyes and the breasts. This style of brass work suggests, no doubt, a primitive origin (Figs. 34, 35).

This metal work is still a living tradition in Western Bengal, specially in the district of Birbhum where it is in the hands of a class of people known as *Jadu-patuas* (magic-painters) who have already been mentioned in the previous chapter. By profession these magic-painters are primarily brass-workers, and make trinkets, gongs, weights, etc., of that metal.\*

On a close study of the metal works mentioned above, it will be found that the technique of the cane and bamboo works has inspired the method of their structural composition. It is prominently witnessed in the metal utensils and rice bowls manufactured by the *Jadu-patuas*. Geometrical designs are executed on them either by interlacing the metal strips as done in bamboo works or by twisting and interweaving the ductile metal wires as done in making cane baskets. Even the general shape of the baskets are imitated in the vertical and horizontal lines that are carved on them. Moreover, the animal and floral motifs are executed in the same technique. As for example, we can take the motif of an elephant in which the trunk and a front tooth make a circle with the head (Fig. 37). This is a conventional style closely resembling the cane work and its common spiral tendency.

Similarly, all the remaining technique of cane weaving is applied in the construction of metal figures. As a result, the metal images are made with the ductile metal wires wound round parts of the body like cane reeds. All these statuettes give evidence of a dynamic movement and suggest a religio-magical origin. Mr. Ray has rightly pointed out to me that this art is more or less wild in

\* O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers, Birbhum*, p. 39.



character, fantastic in style. It is not the creation of the matured mind but is an expression of the folk conception of divinity as guardian and protector. It is not an art that can be appreciated for the sake of its own intrinsic excellence or for its appeal to our sense of beauty, but it is an art that has been utilized by our people as a part of their magical rituals. It is an art evolved by the primitive mind, filled up with fear or ecstasy, and with a craving for existence.

On the other hand, if we closely study the cane and bamboo crafts, we shall not fail to observe that they have gained maturity in scientific and accurate construction. So far this craft is confined to utensils, baskets, shields, arrows and bows, the scope for decorative ornamentation is limited to simple and easy motifs such as chains executed by interlocking bamboo or cane strips in zig-zag ways (Figs. 38, 39).

The spiral knots are made with cane strips in order to tighten or to contract the different parts of the articles that are manufactured. But when this skill in basket-weaving is used in cottage architecture, it creates various geometrical patterns. As a result we find specimens of highly artistic craftsmanship on the ceiling of thatched cottages in Bengal (Fig. 40).

## VI

### EMBROIDERY AND TEXTILES

**E**MBROIDERY works are generally done by the womenfolk of Bengal on *Kanthas*. The patience with which they make a *Kantha* for months and years is remarkable.

According to its use, the *Kantha* may be divided into four classes: (1) wrappers for the body, (2) covers for various articles, (3) pillow-covers, (4) bags made from small pieces of *Kanthas*.

Of the *Kanthas*, those used as wrappers for body (Fig. 41) and for covering articles (Fig. 42) are more important than the others. The length and breadth of the wrappers for the body are bigger, whereas the *Kanthas* used for covering articles are always square-shaped and are small in size. At first, pieces of cloths are joined together by some long stitches to prepare the ground of the *Kantha*. The ground being prepared, vegetable and animal motifs are embroidered along with the borders mostly with geometric designs on them. Generally these *Kanthas* may be divided into four parts according to designs. And in these four chambers are woven various kinds of lotuses, creepers, trees, elephants, horses, fishes, chariots, birds and social pictures or pictures depicting the Puranic and Epic stories. No similarity is maintained in the designs of the different chambers. Generally threads taken from the coloured borders of a sari are used in sewing *Kanthas*. The chief colours of the designs are black, red, yellow and blue. After embroidering all the designs, a *Kantha* is finished by running stitches across the ground with white thread to give it greater durability. Such close stitches being done on both the sides simultaneously, it is difficult to tell the right side from the wrong.

Pillow-covers (Figs. 43-45) and bags are different from the body-wraps and article-covers in the decorative aspect. They are also very small in size and no figures are woven on them. They are decorated with trees, creepers and lotuses only. In these the stitch has to adapt itself to the design which is carried out earlier.

Decoration plays a significant part in the design of the *Kantha*. There is no exaggeration in the details. All the designs are simple and direct. The lotuses and creepers on *Kanthas* strongly resemble Alipana designs.

A picturesque quality is often achieved in the *Kantha* which for the most part shows harmony and calmness in its design. Linear beauty is specially noticeable in the designs of *Kanthas*. This command of the line enables the women artists to express motion, though their technique is fundamentally static. The presentation of animals is purely conventional; they are drawn by abrupt angles, but the effect is extremely decorative. No doubt there are anatomical defects in the different figures that are embroidered on *Kantha*, but the whole composition has such an artistic atmosphere that these defects are easily forgotten.

From ancient times, the people of Bengal have excelled in the art of weaving. Our folk literature tells us about cloths, chiefly saris, bearing artistic names and exquisite embroidery works.

In this respect, the textile industries of Tippera, Tangail, Sylhet and Birbhum are to be specially mentioned. The "Ria," a kind of tight jacket used for covering the breasts of hill women of Tippera, is full of pictorial decorations (Fig. 46). The "Urni" sheet of Sylhet, the famous "Endi" woven by the Namasudras of Habiganj and the coloured striped cloths manufactured on the handlooms in Tangail are unequalled for their fabric and texture. The primitive simplicity of technique and colouring by which the various kinds of patterns are produced, indicates the high antiquity of these textiles.

## VII

### MINOR ARTS

**UTILITY** is the characteristic feature of the minor arts. In this connection, we may mention masks, *Sikās* (string-holders), blocks for making mango and sugar cakes, *Saras* and *Ghats* (earthen pots and pitchers) and pottery. The above articles are restricted to the same use all over Bengal.

*Mask*.—From time immemorial, masks have been associated with the artificial faces worn either by actors in dramatic representations or by the devotees specially of the Gambhira festival for exciting terror. Mask-dancing is a common feature in many religious festivals of Bengal. Generally half-masks are to be seen in large numbers and are made out of clay (Fig. 47), pith and paper. Wooden masks (Fig. 48) are rare. Simple colouring is always the rule, red, black and yellow being chief colours. The masks are enlivened by all sorts of dramatic expressions and the uncanny and supernatural effect of the religious mask fascinates the spectators and even frightens them. The wearing of these masks or false garments being a primitive custom, is connected with early types of folk-lore and religion.

*Sikā*.—*Sikā* or hanging string-holder (Fig. 49) is used to hang earthen pots, plates and beddings. It is made of either jute or cloth. The cells in the string-holders vary according to the use for which they are intended. The string-holders have different names such as "*Kotar-khupi*," "*Guzri-dola*," "*Kal-pasa*," etc., according to their shape or use. Some small cells which look like pigeon holes, are called "*Kotar-khupi*" and so on. Into the large string-holders are woven designs of flowers and peacocks. Round the

main netting, sometimes human figures are also woven by braiding coloured rags. To make such a string-holder, only by weaving and netting knots, it takes several months. The daring workmanship on many string-holders is admirable. The string-holder besides being an object of use fulfils an important decorative purpose in a cottage.

*Blocks for making mango and sugar cakes.*—Blocks for making mango cakes are either incised by means of a sharp nail-cutter on stone (Fig. 53) or fashioned from clay while still in a plastic form by womenfolk. The designing on mango cakes can be said to be the incised relief works. The different figures in the sugar moulds are subordinated to pattern. The figures are all energetic and the curve of the line is bold and clear (Fig. 52). The moulding of the objects is compact and solid. In the sugar moulds, horns and chariots of very big size are specially made during festivals. Vegetable and animal motifs are drawn profusely on these cakes.

*Sara and Ghat.*—The paintings on Laksmi-sara (earthen plate) and Manasa-ghat (earthen pitcher) are extremely interesting and show almost a stationary character in their execution. The designs on these articles vary according to their shapes. The figure of an owl (mount of the Goddess Laksmi) and the symbolic motifs painted on the Laksmi-sara are marked by striking boldness and careless freedom in their design (Figs. 54, 55). Manasa-ghat or the pot representing Manasa, the Goddess of Snakes, is of high historical value. The Goddess is represented both in the theriomorphic (Fig. 50) and in the anthropomorphic form (Fig. 51). This snake worship is non-Aryan in origin and indicates that from a very remote time the people of Bengal have shared religious faith with the inhabitants of Western Asia.

*Pottery.*—The wheel is the principal method of pot construction. Forms are extremely varied and suggest an assurance of

strength. Glaze occurs occasionally; die impressions on the potteries are a main feature. Geometrical devices (Fig. 56), eye, fish motifs and interlocking circles (Fig. 57) are commonly executed on a red or black slip. These potteries as a whole exhibit considerable beauty of outline (Figs. 58-60) and show a close affinity with the prehistoric remains especially in their shape and size.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Black, W. G., Folk-Medicine.
- Bompas, C. H., Folklore of the Santal Parganas.
- Brown, B., The Art of the Cave Dweller.
- Buschan, Georg., *Illustrierte Volkerkunde*, 2 Vols.
- Crooke, W., Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India.
- Dalton, E. T., Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.
- Datta, A. N., A Few Pre-historic Relics and the Rock Paintings of Singanpur.
- De, Rev. L. B., Folk Tales of Bengal.
- Einstein, C., *Afrikanische Plastik*.
- Frazer, Sir J. G., The Golden Bough—The Magic Art, 2 Vols.
- Gomme, Sir G. L., Ethnology in Folklore.
- Hewitt, I. F., The Ruling Races of Pre-historic Times, Vols. I & II.
- Hirn, Y., The Origins of Art.
- Hunter, Sir W. W., The Annals of Rural Bengal.
- Mansuruddin, M., *Haramoni*.
- Marshall, Sir J. H., Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization, 3 Vols.
- Mitra, P., Prehistoric Arts and Crafts of India.
- Mitra-Mazumdar, D. R., *Thakurmar Jhuli*.
- O'Malley, L. S. S., Bengal District Gazetteers, Birbhum.
- Parkyn, E. A., Prehistoric Art.
- Risley, Sir H. H., (1) Tribes and Castes of Bengal, (2) The People of India.
- Rivers, P., Antique Works of Art.
- Routledge, W. S., and K. R., With a Prehistoric People.
- Sarkar, B. K., Folk Element in Hindu Culture.
- Sen, Rai Bahadur D. C., (1) *Brihat Banga*, 2 Vols., (2) Eastern Bengal Ballads, Vols. I-IV, (3) Folk Literature of Bengal.



Tagore, A. N., *Banglar Brata*.

Whitehead, R. H., *The Village Gods of South India*.

Wundt, W., *Elements of Folk Psychology* (Authorized Translation by Schaub).

Yanagi, Soetsu, *Folk Crafts in Japan* (Translated by Shigeyoshi Sakabe).

#### MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Balfour, H., *The Geographical Study of Folklore*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXXV, 1920, London.

Banerjea, J. N., *Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, The Ind. His. Quarterly, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1938, Calcutta.

Bartlett, F. C., *Psychology in Relation to the Popular Story*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXXI, 1920, London.

Coomarswamy, A. K., *The Nature of "Folklore" and "Popular Art,"* Ind. Art and Letters, Vol. XI, No. 2, 1937, London.

Crooke, W., *The Cults of the Mother Goddesses in India*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXX, 1919, London.

Dutt, G. S., *The Folk-dances and Folk-songs of Bengal*, The Tigers' God in Bengal Art, The Brata Dance of Rajghat, The Art of Bengal, The Modern Review, July, 1932, Nov., 1932, Dec., 1933, May, 1932, Calcutta. *The Living Tradition of the Folk Arts in Bengal*, Ind. Art and Letters, Vol. X, No. 1, 1936, London. *Dolls and Figure Toys of Bengal*, The Jour. of Arts and Crafts, Vol. I, No. 1, 1938, Calcutta. *The Indigenous Painters of Bengal*, Painted *Saras* of Rural Bengal, Jour. of the Ind. Society of Oriental Art, Vol. I, No. 1, 1933, Vol. II, 1934, Calcutta. *The Folk Art of Bengal*, Studio, Aug., 1933, London.

French, J. C., *The Land of Wrestlers*, Ind. Art and Letters, Vol. I, No. 1, 1927, London.

Ghosh, A., *Old Bengal Paintings*, Rupam, 1926, Calcutta.

- Gomme, Sir G. L., and Nutt, A., *Ethnological Data in Folk-Lore*, Folk-Lore, Vol. X, 1899, London.
- Jevons, F. B., *Magic and Religion*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXVIII, 1917, London.
- Marett, R. R., *Primitive Values, The Psychology of Culture-Contact, The Transvaluation of Culture*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXVII, 1916, Vol. XXVIII, 1917, Vol. XXIX, 1918, London.
- Mitra, S. C., *Notes on the Ghost-lore of Southern Bengal*, Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol. XIII, No. 1. The "magical conflict" in Santali, Bengali and Ao Naga folk-lore, *Man in India*, Vol. IX, 1929, Ranchi.
- Mookerjee, A., *Collections of Nahar Museum*, The Modern Review, Dec., 1934, Calcutta. *Bengal School of Painting*, A. B. Patrika, Dec., 1, 1935, Calcutta. *Prachin Banglay Sishu-monobijnan* (Child Psychology in Ancient Bengal), *Banglar Sakti, Agrahayan, 1343*, B.S., Calcutta. *Naliagramer Rasakala Sampad* (Arts and Crafts of Naliagram), *Prabartak, Magh, 1341*, B.S., Calcutta. *Jatiya Jibane Thakurmar Dan* (Grandmother's Contribution to our National Life), *Prabasi, Kartik, 1340*, B.S., Calcutta. *Banglar Pata-Chitra o Pora-Matir Falak* (Pata Paintings and Terra-cottas of Bengal), *Bharatbarsha, Falgun, 1345*, B.S., Calcutta.
- Perry, W. J., *The Dramatic Element in Ritual*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXXIX, 1928, London.
- Ray, S. K., *The Characteristic Features of Alpana, Primitive Statuettes of Western Bengal*, The Jour. of Arts and Crafts, Vol. I, No. 1, 1938, and Vol. II, No. 1, 1939, Calcutta.
- Rivers, W. H. R., *The Sociological Significance of Myth*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XXIII, 1912, London.
- Rose, H. J., *Mythology and Pseudo-Mythology*, Folk-Lore, Vol. XLVI, 1935, London.

- Sen, Indubala, *Bikrampur Bibaha Mangal* (Marriage Ceremony of Bikrampur), *Prativa, Bhadra*, 1324, B.S., Calcutta.
- Temple, Sir R. C., The Science of Folk-Lore, *The Folk-Lore Journal*, Vol. V, 1887, London.
- Wake, C. S., The Philosophy of Folk-Tales, *The Folk-Lore Journal*, Vol. V, 1887, London.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES

### FRONTISPIECE

- Left* A coloured wooden female doll, Birbhum District. Limbs shown in colour only ; black and red lines drawn with steady strokes on yellow body colour, and sky blue on the skirt. See page 13.
- Right* Another wooden female doll. Coloured on a white coating, Hooghly District. Lines bold. General shape of the figure denoting volume. See page 13.

### PLATE I

1. Circular Alipana, Birbhum District. Central starting point provided by spiral arrangement. Foot marks representing the goddess Laksmi, shown in four corners. See page 6.

### PLATE II

2. Tara-Brata Alipana, Faridpur District. Drawn completely in the solution of ground rice. On the top the sun with the matted hair flanked by Siva-Durga motif, in the middle the whole universe with sixteen stars and on the bottom the moon and also the earth representing the seat of the devotee. Right side, various kinds of ornaments and household goods. See page 7.

### PLATE III

3. Maghmandal-Brata Alipana, Dacca District. Drawn with five coloured powders. The main burnt-brick colour used in drawing the sun at the top, the first circle of the central universe (*Mandal*) and the seat of the devotee. Left side, toilet objects and ornaments. Right side, a cloth, a *Madar* tree, a Laksmi-casket, a running horse, and a pair of bangles. See page 9.

## PLATE IV

4. A toy or a cult object. Probably a dog, Birbhum District. Hand-made terra-cotta. Marked by incised lines. See page 11.
5. A toy, horse mounted on wheels, Mymensingh District. Hand-made terra-cotta. See page 11.

## PLATE V

6. Hand-made terra-cotta dolls, young girls, Mymensingh District. Massive body, ornamentation by incised lines. Indian red colour secured by burning the figure under the fire of husk. Pellets used to mark eyes, lips deeply indented. See page 11.
7. Sun-baked clay female dolls, Faridpur District. Hand-made. Completely coloured with a lacquer coating. Colour scheme divided into two portions—black on the upper part and Indian red on the lower. See page 13.

## PLATE VI

8. Terra-cotta doll, a milkmaid shaped by hand with the help of a wheel, Birbhum District. Drapery, ornaments and eyes painted with Indian red and black on silver coating. Left hand embracing the child and right one touching the top of the pitcher—its globular portion forming part of the face of the figure. See page 11.
9. Another terra-cotta male doll mounted on an elephant, Birbhum District. See page 11.

## PLATE VII

10. Sun-baked clay doll or a cult object, Faridpur District. Hand-made. Hands stretched upwards and one foot projecting forward. Body painted with yellow colour and the eye, nose and mouth with black. See page 11.

## PLATE VIII

11. Mother and child, Mymensingh District. Hand-made terra-cotta doll or a cult object. Ornaments executed by instrumental pressure. See page 11.

## PLATE IX

12. Wooden female dolls, Kalighat. Painted with yellow, red and black—yellow being the body-colour and the cloth red. Free from angles and no sign of legs. See page 13.

## PLATE X

13. Wooden female dolls, Burdwan District. Painted on a white coating. Lines bold. See page 13.

## PLATE XI

14. An owl, Burdwan District. Painted toy, carved out from bamboo. See page 13.
15. Wooden female doll, Tippera District. Executed luxuriously with patches of colour over an underlying painting of darker hue. See page 13.

## PLATE XII

- 16-17. Elephants and horses mounted on wheels, Tippera District. Painted wooden toys, wheels and pedestals not coloured—completely left in natural condition. See page 13.

## PLATE XIII

18. A wooden gate-keeper of a Ratha, Khulna District. Painted with yellow and nut-brown. Grotesque in form. See page 14.

## PLATE XIV

19. A *Brisa-Kath* (wooden-post) representing a male figure in relief, Kalighat. Bull and phallic emblem carved out in complete round. See page 15.
20. A *Brisa-Kath* representing a female figure, Natan-Bazar, Calcutta. Painted on a white coating with yellow and black. See page 15.

## PLATE XV

21. A miniature *Brisa-Kath* representing a male figure, Sylhet District. Pyramidal crown on the head; eyes and nose elongated and hands folded. See page 15.

## PLATE XVI

22. Moulded terra-cotta female dolls, Faridpur District. Each doll showing a distinct posture by different attitude of hands. Lower portions massive and draperies shown by bold strokes of black colour. See page 13.
23. Moulded terra-cotta horse and toys, Faridpur District. Painted with black, yellow and red on a white ground. See page 14.
24. A sepoy and a monkey made of pith, Faridpur District. Primary colours—red and black. Different parts of the body joined with the torso. Flexible joints. See page 14.

## PLATE XVII

25. Moulded terra-cotta male doll in a meditative pose, Faridpur District. Kneeling posture with two hands resting on each knee. Scarf-like dress covering shoulders and hands. See page 13.

## PLATE XVIII

26. A female droll figure, Birbhum District. Moulded terra-cotta doll. Denoting fertility. Painted with yellow and black. See page 14.

## PLATE XIX

27. Terra-cotta Sasthi goddess, Birbhum District. Hand-made. Two children on her lap and two on her abdomen. Burnt under slow fire of husk and black colouring obtained from the smoke. Ornaments grooved and eyes perforated. See page 12.

## PLATE XX

28. A hanging scroll from Birbhum District. Depicting *Krishnalila*. Upper scene—stealing of clothes of the milk-maids by Krishna on a tree; clothes hanging on different branches and nude milkmaids begging for their garments. Middle scene—Krishna seated on a chair under a tree, listening to the milkmaids.

Lower scene—Krisna as a milkman carrying *Dadhibhandas* (pots containing curd) with four milkmaids. Each scene separated by horizontal lines with verticle borders. See page 18.

#### PLATE XXI

29. Another panel of *Krisnalila* scene from the scroll mentioned above. Upper scene—mother Yasoda dressing child Krisna before setting out for pasture fields along with his playmates ; lower scene—Krisna as a head of the cowherds going to pasture field with flute in hand and cows in front. See page 18.

#### PLATE XXII

30. A hanging scroll from Hooghly District. Depicting *Ramlila* scene—the exile of Rama. Dasarath lying on the floor smitten with grief and one of his queens, probably Kausalya, the mother of Rama, lying prone. One queen attending to the king and another bidding farewell to Rama and his party consisting of Lakshmana and Sita in the middle. Figures shown in profile and designs of drapery distinguished from each other. Hair of the three figures of the party fashioned carefully. Leaf borders shown in four corners. Painted in Indian red, dark blue and yellow colours. See page 16.

#### PLATE XXIII

31. Another panel of *Ramlila* scene from the scroll mentioned above, depicting the return of Rama with his party. Headdress marked with leaves—the sign of exile. Rama and Lakshmana dressed in trousers. See page 16.

#### PLATE XXIV

32. A miniature painting, a male figure (*Vaisnava*). Bankura District. Body shown in front but face invariably in profile. Stylised drapery and decoration. Body colours—Indian red and black. See page 19.



## PLATE XXV

33. Another miniature painting representing a female figure (Vaisnavi), Bankura District. See page 19.

## PLATE XXVI

34. A bronze image of the goddess Kali (?), Murshidabad District. Supported by a stele, and below, a triangular pedestal. Upper hands made of ductile metal wires moving spirally and horizontally. Lower hands nailed to the breast. Pellets used for eyes, breasts and earrings. Bangles and necklaces resembling a cane, bamboo or wood prototype. Legs in a Yogasana pose and a cincture round the waist. See page 21.

## PLATE XXVII

35. A seated bronze goddess with an aureole, Murshidabad District. Left leg protruding from the main torso. See page 21.

## PLATE XXVIII

36. A wooden rice-measure plated with brass, Birbhum District. The main design representing a pair of interlocked pigeons. Heads separated, body from neck to tail completely united. Each design demarcated below by a flower-like motif and on the top by horizontal lines. Incised line works. See page 20.
37. Another wooden rice-measure plated with brass, Birbhum District. Main design demarcated by animal, fish motif, etc. Designs made of twisting ductile metal wires. See page 21.

## PLATE XXIX

38. A cane basket, Faridpur District. Thin cane vertically laid across the body structure made of thick canes arranged spirally. Spiral knots placed separately between the cross-wise weaving. See page 22.
39. Laksmi-casket made of cane and cowrie, Rajshahi District. Ornamentations shown by juxtaposition of cowries. In the

first and third lines, cowries arranged vertically and in the middle horizontally. Flowers made of cowries placed one after another in a cyclic order. Cowries stitched with thread on a red cloth mounted on bamboo structure. See page 22.

#### PLATE XXX

40. Cane work on ceiling of a thatched cottage, Birbhum District. Cane stripes interlaced with crosswise bamboo frames resulting in various patterns. Coloured in red, black and green. See page 22.

#### PLATE XXXI

41. A *Kantha* used as wrapper for body, Bogra District. Bigger size. Woven with running and chain stitch with coloured threads taken from the borders of worn-out saris. Covered with peacocks, elephants, horses, tigers and human figures. Betel-leaf borders ending with alternating diagonals. Donee's name as well as the address of the maker written in Bengali script in the middle chamber. See page 23.

#### PLATE XXXII

42. A *Kantha* for covering articles, Jessore District. Smaller and square in size. Central flower encircled by different creepers covering the major field. In four corners embroidered trees, elephants, flowers, Rathas, etc., with an elaborate border. Embroidered threads running irregularly. See page 23.
43. A pillow case made of cloth, Jessore District. Applique works. Patterns produced by different layers of coloured cloths stitched to the ground. Each flower separated from the other by creeper-like design ending with T- and V-shaped points. Zig-zag pattern in the middle. See page 24.

#### PLATE XXXIII

- 44-45. Two pillow-covers, Birbhum District. Rectangular in size. Flower and creeper designs being always evident. Stitches in the ground controlling the shape and size of the designs. See page 24.

## PLATE XXXIV

46. "Ria" textile, Tippera District. Designs produced by the use of warp and weft threads mainly of yellow and red colours. Same effect on both sides. See page 24.

## PLATE XXXV

47. A clay mask made in a mould, Mymensingh District. Used either in religious rites or in dramatic representations. Above the forehead one hole and two others on the ears for passing strings or cords to fasten it to the face. Simple colouring. See page 25.
48. A wooden mask, Faridpur District. Made of Neem wood. See page 25.

## PLATE XXXVI

49. Sika (string-holder) used to hang earthen pots, plates and beddings, Jessore District. Made of jute and coloured rags. Floral designs embroidered with knitted knots. See page 25.

## PLATE XXXVII

50. An earthen Manasa-ghat, Faridpur District. Four hooded snakes joined separately with the pitcher. See page 26.
51. An earthen Manasa-ghat, Backerganj District. Anthropomorphic representation of the goddess Manasa encircled with seven hooded snakes on the top of and below a swan. Coloured with yellowish red, blue and black. See page 26.

## PLATE XXXVIII

52. A sugar cake, a bird, Faridpur District. See page 26.
53. Mould of a mango cake, Jessore District. Incised works on a stone-plate. See page 26.

## PLATE XXXIX

54. An earthen Lakami-sara, Faridpur District. Smaller size. Floral motifs on the top and below the figure of an owl—mount of the goddess. See page 26.

55. An earthen Laksmi-sara, Dacca District. Bigger size. On the top, Krishna with his consort Laksmi. The deity in the middle of a chariot with her two attendants flanked by two peacocks. Strong colouring. See page 27.

## PLATE XL

56. An earthen betel-vessel, Birbhum District. Crosswise designs with black colour on silver coating. See page 27.

## PLATE XLI

57. An earthen pitcher tempered with sand, Birbhum District. Horizontal wavy lines supported by cross-hatched design on a red wash. Free-hand drawing. See page 27.

## PLATE XLII

58. An earthen fire-pan, Faridpur District. Coated with a slip of red extract from unripe " Gab " fruits. See page 27.
59. An earthen hooka-bearer, Faridpur District. Coated with a slip of red ochre. See page 27.
60. An earthen storage jar, also used for holding raw sugar, Faridpur District. Tapering base with wide mouth. See page 27.

## NOTE

A painted Laksmi-sara mounted on the cover, Faridpur District. The symbol of *Basundhara* (the earth) reproduced from Alipana drawing on fly leaf.



\*

## PRINCIPAL COLLECTIONS OF FOLK ART OF BENGAL

### *Private Collections*

- Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, C.I.E., D.Litt. (Hon.), Calcutta.  
Mr. G. S. Dutt, I.C.S., Calcutta.  
Dr. Rai Bahadur Dinesh Chandra Sen, D.Litt. (Hon.), Behala.  
Mr. Ajit Ghosh, Calcutta.  
Mr. Jamini Roy, Calcutta.  
His Highness the Maharaja of Tippera, Agartala.  
Mr. J. C. French, I.C.S., London.  
Prof. Shahid Suhrawardy, Calcutta.  
Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Calcutta.  
Mr. Ajitoomar Mookerjee, Calcutta.

### *Public Collections*

- Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, Calcutta.  
Kala-Bhawan Museum, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.  
Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta.  
Nahar Museum, Calcutta.  
Indian Museum, Calcutta.



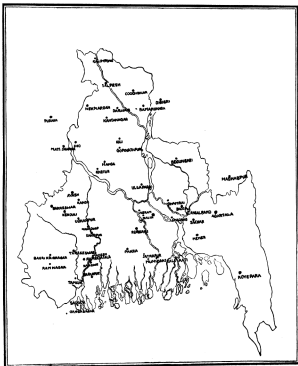
## SOME IMPORTANT FAIRS (*Melas*)

WHERE OBJECTS OF FOLK ARTS AND CRAFTS OF BENGAL ARE  
EXHIBITED ANNUALLY

- Agartala, Tippera State ; *Doler Mela*.  
Aynah, Birbhum District ; *Maghi Purnima Mela*.  
Bagri Krishnagar, Midnapur District ; *Doler Mela*.  
Bakreswar, Birbhum District ; *Sivaratni Mela*.  
Bamandanga, Rangpur District ; *Jagadhatri-Puja Mela*.  
Baruipur, 24-Parganas ; *Rash Mela*.  
Begunbari, Mymensingh ; *Rather Mela*.  
Cooch Behar, Cooch Behar State ; *Rash Jatra Mela*.  
Dacca, Dacca District ; *Janmashtami Mela*.  
Darwani, Rangpur District ; *5th Falgun*.  
Dhamrai, Dacca District ; *Chaitra Sankranti Mela*.  
Dhubri, Goalpara District ; *Brahmaputra bathing Mela*.  
Gangasagar, 24-Parganas ; *Gangasagar Mela*.  
Gopinathpur, Bogra District ; *Dole Purnima Mela*.  
Hili, Dinajpur District ; *Magh Mela*.  
Iho, Malda District ; January 18 to February 3.  
Jalpesh, Jalpaiguri District ; *Sivaratni Mela*.  
Jatrapur, Khulna District ; *Rather Mela*.  
Kalaskati, Backerganj District ; *Kalaskati Mela*.  
Kalighat, Calcutta ; *Rash Jatra Mela*.  
Kalimpong, Darjeeling District ; *Kalimpong Mela*.  
Kandi, Murshidabad District ; *Paush Sankranti Mela*.  
Kantanagar, Dinajpur District ; *Gosha Mela*.  
Kenduli, Birbhum District ; *Paush Sankranti Mela*.  
Khetur, Rajshahi District ; *Premtoli Mela*.



- Koyepara, Chittagong District ; *Rath Jatra Mela*.  
Langalband, Dacca District ; *Astami-Snan Mela*.  
Lohajang, Dacca District ; *Chaitra Sankranti Mela*.  
Madhabpur, Sylhet District ; First week of December.  
Mahesh, Hooghly District ; *Rather Mela*.  
Mahisadal (Tamluk), Midnapur District ; *Rather Mela*.  
Manda, Rajshahi District ; *Ramnabami Mela*.  
Matijharna (Rajmahal Hills), Santal Pargana ; *Sivaratri Mela*.  
Meher, Tippera District ; *Kali-Bari Mela*.  
Muniganj, Khulna District ; *Baruni Mela*.  
Nabadwip, Nadia District ; *Rash Jatra Mela*.  
Nalia, Faridpur District ; *Maghi Purnima Mela*.  
Nekmardan, Dinajpur District ; *Nekmardan Mela*.  
Panjia, Jessore District ; *Rather Mela*.  
Purnia, Purnia District ; January-February.  
Ramnagar, Midnapur District ; *Saraswati Mela*.  
Ramrajatala, Howrah District ; *Ramnabami Mela*.  
Rupganj, Jessore District ; Tuesdays and Saturdays in *Baisakh*.  
Sachar, Tippera District ; *Rather Mela*.  
Santipur, Nadia District ; *Rash Jatra Mela*.  
Seugor, 24-Parganas ; *Paush Sankranti Mela*.  
Tarakeswar, Hooghly District ; *Sivaratri Mela*.  
Udhanpur, Burdwan District ; *Paush Sankranti Mela*.  
Ullapara, Pabna District ; Middle of *Sraavan*.  
Vinagar, Faridpur District ; *Baruni Mela*.



MAP OF BENGAL



# INDEX

- Ajanta 5  
 Alakami, the goddess of misfortune 12  
 Aliboti, a kind of hand-made clay doll 12  
 Alipara 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 24  
   —Alipara 5, 6  
 Baharas, mounts 9  
 Bana Devi, the sylvan deity 9  
 Bankura, Dist., Bengal 18  
 Bar-phoda, piercing the body by arrows 2  
 Bediyya, nomadic tribe, Bengal 17  
 Bengal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26  
   —Bengal 1  
   —Bengali 1, 7  
 Bher, possession of supernatural beings 2  
 Birbhum, Dist., Bengal 20, 24  
 Blocks:  
   —Mango cakes 25, 26  
   —Sugar cakes 25, 26  
 Brata, vow 2, 7, 9  
   —Brata-Alipara 7, 10  
 Briso-koti, bull-poets 14, 15  
 Budo-Budi, old man and old lady 2  
 Chakshuden, bestowal of eye-sight 17  
 Circular Alipara, see Alipara  
 Cult objects 12  
 Dhulo-Sapta, dusting the temple with hair 2  
 Dolls-dance 14  
 Durga, see Siva-Durga  
 Dutt, G. S. 17  
 Eastern Bengal 9, 17  
 Eastern India 18  
 Egyptian mummy 13  
 Endi 24  
 Epic 23  
 Gambhira, a religious festival 2, 25  
 Ganasa 9  
 Ghat, ceremonial pot 25, 26  
 Grandestras, village gods and goddesses 20  
 Guzri-dola, fringed string-holder 25  
 Habiganj, Sylhet Dt. 24  
 Hara-Parvati 15  
 Harvest Goddess 1  
 Hei-Hei-Hai, a peculiar sound made with the  
   mouth 2  
 Hindu 18  
 Indian Red 17  
 Indra 9  
 Jado-Patana, magic-painters 16, 17, 18, 21  
 Java 14  
 Kailasa, Mt. 9  
 Kajalrekha 9  
 Kal-pasa, a chain like string-holder 25  
 Kali, see Rakas Kali  
 Kantha, wrapper 23, 24  
 Kanzi-dhoana, washing the elbow 2  
 Kartikaya 9  
 Koter-khupi, cells in string-holder which look  
   like pigeon holes 25  
 Krimahila 18  
 Kanku, rice bowl 6  
 Kar-beta, mystic formula 2  
 Laksmara 9  
 Lakmi 6, 7, 9, 26  
   —Lakmi-puja 6, 7  
   —Lakmi-sara 26  
 Leo-beta, mystic formula 2  
 Linga, phallic symbol 2  
 Magh, Bengali month 7  
   —Maghmandal-Brata 7  
 Magic-painters, see Jado-patana  
 Mallabhum, Bankura Dt., 18  
 Marasa 1, 26  
   —Marasa Devi 9  
   —Marasa-ghat 26  
 Mango cakes, see Blocks  
 Mask 25  
   —Mask-dancing 25  
 Mother Goddess 1  
 Mummy, see Egyptian mummy  
 Namasudras 24  
 Needle-Prince 10  
 Negro art 8  
 Non-Aryan 1, 26  
 North Bengal 2  
 Parvati 2, 9  
 Pata 16  
 Patua 16  
 Pacho-Pachi 2  
 Phul-bhanga, breaking down twigs 2  
 Pottery 25, 26, 27

Paranic 23  
Puspaka, the mythological aeroplane 9

Rakus Kali 9  
Ram 9  
—Ramila 18  
Rathas, chariots 11, 14  
Ray, S. K. 21  
Ria, costume 24

Santala 17  
Saras 23, 26  
Sari 23, 24  
Sathi Goddess 1, 12  
Sat-Satin (co-wives) 7, 10  
Satyanarayan 18  
Satyapir 18  
Scars, *Trophis aspera* 9  
Shadow-play 18  
Shaki, a kind of rice 9  
Sikhara, spire, tower 15  
Siddhas, witches 9  
Silhas 25  
Sita 9  
Sitala 1, 12  
Siva 2, 9  
—Siva-Durga 7, 10  
—Siva-lingam 15

Snake Goddess 1  
Sola, pich 14  
—Solakar 14  
Sri-achara, customs observed by women 3  
String-holders, see *Sikas*  
Sugar cakes, see *Blocka*  
Sutradhar, carpenter 14  
Sylhet, Dist., Assam 24

Tagore, A. N. 10  
Tangail, E. Bengal 24  
Tara-Brata 7, 10  
Tigers' God 18  
Toppers, Dist., Bengal 24  
*Trophis aspera*, see *Scars*  
Tulat-paper, hand-made coarse paper 16

Ufa-Ufa-Ufa, suspicious lip-play 2  
Urut, costume 24

Vara-Durga 1  
Vinnu 9

Western Asia 26  
Western Bengal 17 18

Yama 9

## PLATES





1. Circular Alpana, Bihbhum.







2. Tara-Brata Alpana, Paridpur.





3. Majhmandal-Brata Alpasa, Dacca.





Above : 4. Terra-cotta dog (?), Birbhum.

Below : 5. Terra-cotta horse mounted on wheels, Mymensingh.



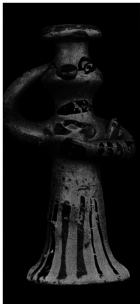


Above : 6. Terra-cotta female dolls, Mymensingh.

Below : 7. Sun-baked clay female dolls coated with lacquer, Faridpur.







8. Terra-cotta female doll, Birbhum.



9. Terra-cotta male doll mounted on an elephant, Birbhum.





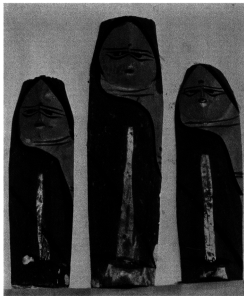
10. Sun-baked clay male doll (?) in a meditative pose, Dacca.





11. Terra-cotta doll (P) mother and child, Myrmanalagh.





12. Painted wooden female dolls, Kalighat.







13. Painted wooden female dolls, Burdwan.



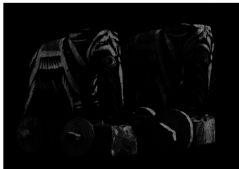


14. Painted toy made of bamboo,  
an owl, Burdwan.



15. Painted wooden female  
doll, Tippera.





Above : 16. Painted wooden toy, elephants mounted on wheels, Tippers.

Below : 17. Painted wooden toy, horses mounted on wheels, Tippers.





18. Painted wooden doll of a gate keeper  
from Ratha, Khulna.



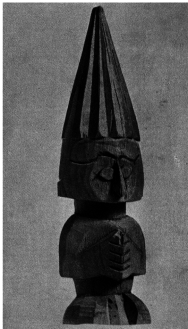




19. Brisa-kat (wooden-post),  
Kailghat.

20. Painted Brisa-kat  
(wooden-post), Natun-bazar,  
Calcutta.





21. Miniature Brisa-kat (wooden-post), Sylhet.



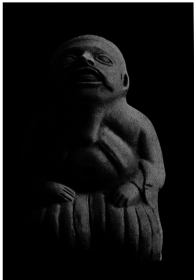


Above : 22. Cast terra-cotta female dolls, Faridpur.

Below : Left—23. Cast terra-cotta toy, a horse and a bird, Faridpur.

Right—24. Pith dolls, a sepoy and a monkey, Faridpur.

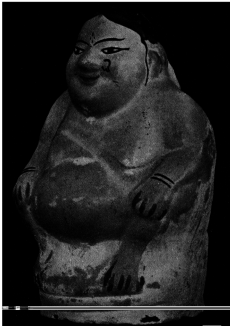




25. Cast terra-cotta male doll in a meditative pose, Paridpur.

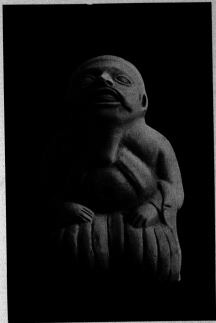






26. Cast terra-cotta droll female figure, Birbhum.





25. Cast terra-cotta male doll in a meditative pose, Paridpur.





28. Hanging-scroll, Kisekilla scene, Birahum.





29. Hanging-scroll, Kisanalla scene, Birbhum.







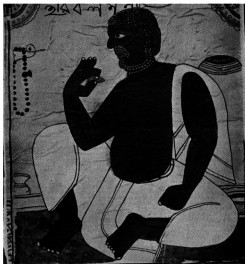
30. Hanging-scroll, Ramlila scene, Hooghly.





31. Hanging-scroll, Ramilla scene, Hooghly.





32. Miniature painting on a *vanava*, *pankura*.

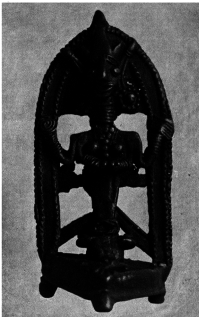




33. Miniature painting of a Valanveli, Bankura.







34. Bronze image of the Goddess Kali (?), Murshidabad.





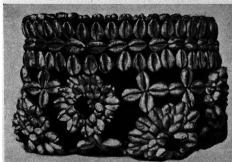
35. A bronze Goddess, Murshidabad.





Above : 36. Wooden rice-bowl plated with brass, Birbhum.  
 Below : 37. Wooden rice-bowl plated with brass, Birbhum.



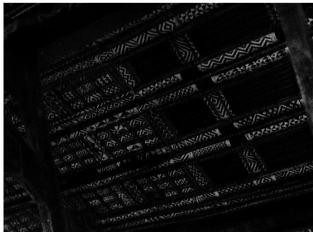


Above : 38. Cane basket, Faridpur.

Below : 39. Lakshmi-casket made of cane and cowrie, Rajshahi.

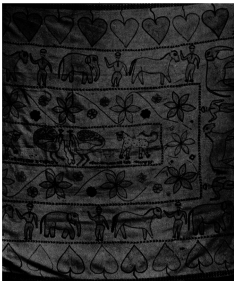






40. Cane work on ceiling of a thatched cottage, Birbhum.





41. Kantha (body-wrapper), Bagra.

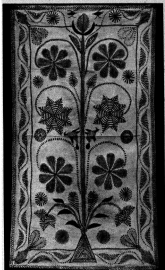




Above : 42. Kantha (article-cover), Jessore.

Below : 43. Pillow-case, Jessore.





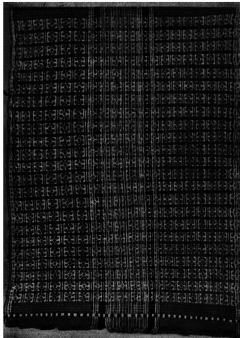
44. Kartha (pillow-cover), Jessoes.



45. Kartha (pillow-cover),  
Birkham.

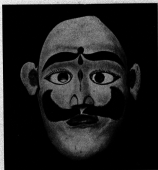
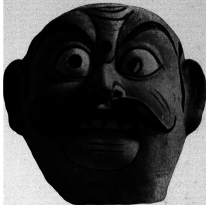






46. *Ria textile*, Tzipora.





Above : 47. Earthen mask, Nymaratgh.  
Below : 48. Wooden mask, Faridpur.





49. Sika (string-holder), Jesso.





50. Manasa Chat, Faridpur.



51. Manasa Chat (painted),  
Buckerganj.







Above : 52. Sugar cake, a bird, Faridpur.

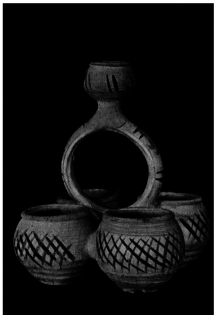
Below : 53. Mango cake mould (stone-plate), Jessore.





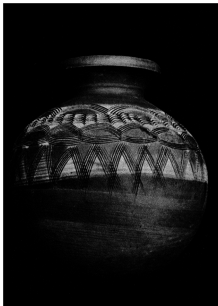
Above : 54. Lakmi-sara (earthen-plate), Faridpur.  
Below : 55. Lakmi-sara (earthen-plate), Dacca.





56. An earthen betel-vessel, Birmahm.





57. An incised earthen picher, Birbhum.







Below : Left --58. An earthen hooka-stand, Faridpur.  
 Right --60. An earthen jar, Faridpur.















